Take the Bloat Out of Your Diet

If you often feel bloated after eating, simple changes to your diet can help.

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We all know the pleasures of a good meal, and how that can be followed by discomfort around the waistband when we've eaten too much. While occasional episodes of feeling bloated after eating are the price we pay for overindulgence, for some people this unpleasant sensation is an all too common occurrence.

But don't throw down your napkin in surrender just yet. There is hope. With the proper diet adjustments and simple changes in eating habits, it is possible to enjoy food and feel good afterward.

Why Am I Bloated After Eating?
In a nutshell, that uncomfortable, bloated-after-eating feeling is typically caused by too much intestinal gas and/or excessive contents in the intestine. This in turn makes the stomach swell and feel tight.

The exact cause of bloating, however, can vary from individual to individual. Some people feel bloated after eating because they simply ate too much. The more a person eats, the longer it takes for the food to move from the stomach to the small intestine for digestion and the more bloated after eating you can feel. Other people may be sensitive to certain types of food.

For people who are **lactose-intolerant**, consuming regular milk and dairy products can cause discomfort. In addition, too much **fiber** in your diet can contribute to bloating after eating.

"High fiber intakes are not a problem if you are used to them, but going from a low to high [fiber diet] too rapidly can cause temporary discomfort in some people," says Susan B. Roberts, PhD, professor in the nutrition and psychiatry departments at Tufts University in Boston and author of *The Instinct Diet* (Workman). You definitely want to enjoy the health benefits of a **high-fiber diet**, but add fiber to your diet more gradually if you think that's the source of your bloated feeling.

The number of **calories** you eat can also be a trigger. The body secretes hormones from the walls of the intestines that can cause nausea and bloating when too many calories are consumed. Try eating four to six small meals rather than three large meals a day.

How to Eliminate That Bloated-After-Eating Feeling
"Eating smaller meals can help prevent bloating," says Joan Salge Blake, RD, clinical associate professor in the department of health sciences at Boston University. "And slow down!" Eating or drinking too quickly can cause excess air to be swallowed, which contributes to the problem, she says.

In addition, watch what you eat. "Fatty foods take longer to digest," says Lona Sandon, RD, assistant professor in the department of clinical nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "Also, vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and beans can cause more gas to be formed when digested in the small

intestine." Of course, this doesn't mean you should avoid these healthful choices, just try to eat smaller portions of them at each sitting to see if that helps your body digest them more easily.

Here are some other ideas to relieve bloating after eating:

- Drink plenty of fluids, like water, to aid digestion. Sip slowly throughout the day, however; don't chug. as that will defeat the purpose. Carbonated beverages and drinks like coffee that have a diuretic effect don't count.

- Consider adding probiotic yogurt — Dannon is one brand to try — to your diet to encourage a **healthy digestive tract**. Keep in mind it may take a few weeks to notice its positive effects.

- Take a walk after you eat and get adequate **exercise** on a regular basis; both can ease bloating and help with overall digestion.

As for over-the-counter aids, "they're really only Band-Aids," says Dr. Roberts, "whereas eating the amount of calories your body needs and no more is a real cure."

Reference website: http://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/feeling-bloated-after-eating.aspx